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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
POLICY PLANNING COUNCIL
WASHINGTON

Jack —

This may interest you.

too

Mr. Smith, CIA

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MEMORANDUM FOR: [REDACTED]

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Mr. Smith

A paper forwarded to you from Mr. Owen.

D/est

Please read & pass as
appropriate.

[REDACTED]
10 Nov 66

(DATE)

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DD/GCI

11 August 1964

CA/EUR

European IIG Affairs

1. The European IIG is all but defunct. There have been no meetings since May. Ladd has been sick (bad back) since then and has only just returned part time to the Department.

2. The DDP co-representatives, [redacted] consider the thing a waste of time and do nothing about the group unless there is an operational angle involved.

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Phil

Counselor and Chairman
Policy Planning Council
Washington

DDI- 4632-6

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November 1, 1966

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Poland - Impressions and Reflections

These impressions are based on a very small sample of Polish opinion; I talked seriously to about a dozen people, divided about equally between government and non-government.

1. Polish Concerns. Virtually every conversation began and ended with one subject: the security of the Polish state. Shadowed by a history of four partitions, Poles of every type and persuasion - in and out of government - express or reflect their fear that this time, too, Poland will not endure.

One remark is worth quoting: When a Polish official and I were discussing whether Polish inheritance taxes might permit accumulation of an estate over several generations, he smiled and added: "Yes, but our country never seems to last long enough to make this worthwhile."

You have the feeling that you are talking to people living in a house that has collapsed about them several times; they are constantly looking at the roof and the walls - in this case, at their geography. Sandwiched in between Germany and Russia, they can hardly be blamed if they worry about a fifth partition.

Polish concerns seem more of a product of this history and geography than of the obsessive hatred of Germany I expected to find.

When I said to a Polish newspaperman, before the monument to the dead of the Ghetto, that this was a monument not only to the crimes of one nation but to the moral weakness of man, I was surprised at his agreement. Herb Kaiser (Embassy) mentioned that the Ambassador, visiting Auschwitz at Yom Kippur, had written in the visitor's book: "No one of us innocent." The newspaperman said that most thoughtful Poles were of the same

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view, though it was hard to persuade the average man.

Poles evidently don't like or trust Germans, but there's much more than this to their security concerns. Even when memories of wartime horrors have faded, the hard facts of geography will remain, - and the history of a millenium in which no Polish generation was spared war, or foreign rule, or both.

2. Polish Remedies. When you ask Poles how their security concerns could be met by long-term change, they say something like this:

"Dissolve both blocs; limit armaments in Central Europe; exchange security guarantees; and create a new security organization in Europe to police the result."

The object of all this, they make clear, is to create a system which will permit East and West to concentrate on the really serious business of jointly sitting on Germany, instead of wasting their time opposing each other.

But this will be a long time coming, they acknowledge; in fact, you get the impression they are sceptical it will happen at all.

In the meantime, they say, limited security measures should be initiated in Central Europe. Hence the Rapacki and Gomulka Plans. If we don't like these proposals, they ask, why don't we make counter-proposals? There is real Polish bitterness on this point - the more so since they don't seem to expect us, in fact, to take their concerns in this field more seriously in the future than they believe we have in the past.

3. Result. The net result is a people who do not believe that the existing situation assures their security, yet who do not see any likely alternative in sight.

This is a prescription for worry - and worry is what Poles do.

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This worry makes it easier, I would suppose, for the hardnosed types who run the country to stay in power and to block moves toward reconciliation with Germany (let alone, more basic changes in the European status quo).

4. Prospect. Polish security concerns are rooted in their perception of the kind of world they live in: a world of national states, each rapaciously seeking narrow national advantage, at the expense of others. This is the way Poland's neighbors have always acted (and it is the way that Poland ~~has acted toward its neighbors, when it could~~). It is difficult for Poles to conceive a different kind of Europe. Until they do, I would guess that they will remain obsessed by concerns over their security - given the facts of their geography.

Our task should be to convey to thoughtful Poles a different vision of the future: one in which the concept of wider communities has so clearly replaced nationalism as to make it evident, even to this stubborn and heroic people, that wars for national territorial gain have become as unlikely as wars between feudal lords were after the decline of feudalism.

The best way to make this vision convincing is to help bring it into being - by trying to create viable alternatives to nationalism in the West, in the East, and in East-West relations.^{1/}

The ambiguity in Polish reactions to Western European integration is striking. They fear its effect on Polish trade or that it may become a cloak for German hegemony; they agree that if it proceeds far enough to subsume German nationalism it will have been a good thing for Poland. They are puzzled by the process of community-building; it is unlike anything in their experience; they watch it with an odd mixture of

^{1/}The conventional wisdom is that nationalism is a good thing in Eastern Europe, because it reduces Soviet influence. My guess is that this process has gone about as far as it is likely to go for some time. The more important effect of nationalism, from here on out, may well be to strengthen objections, among Germany's Eastern neighbors, to German reunification.

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fascination and scepticism. That such a Western Europe should be clearly linked to the US, in the present situation, is questioned by few in Poland.

Community building in the East is not a wholly new thought to them. They toy with the idea of seeking a greater measure of economic integration among the "northern tier" - Poland, Czechoslovakia, and perhaps Hungary. They quickly add, however, that the Soviet Union would never permit it.

They are also interested in building a structure of multilateral East-West cooperation. They argue strongly for strengthening the Economic Commission for Europe.

The President's speech held out the vision of a Europe which was more stable and secure because it was built on a foundation of such communities, rather than merely national states rolling around loosely. It was well received, but I wonder how much of this message got through to the Poles. My guess is that it will have to be repeated many times and in many different ways.

If the vision can be made convincing; if thoughtful Poles can see the structure of a new Europe taking shape, in which what one Pole called "our old-fashioned nationalism" is no longer a sure clue to national interest; if Germany can dramatize this change by renouncing the Oder-Neisse - then deep changes in the Polish view of the kind of world they are living in might over the long run gradually make still further changes possible.

5. Conclusion. The most impressive man I met in Poland was a professor of moral philosophy (Professor Kolakowski, who has since reportedly been expelled from the Communist Party for his courage and creative thought). He spoke of his main concern for the future:

"What will our young people believe in?

" Socialism - no one takes that seriously as an ideology.

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"Religion - its hold will decline as the present generation is succeeded by a younger generation born to city life. (He may be right, but I was struck by the large proportion of young people, presumably born to city life - men as well as women - in church in Warsaw.)

"That leaves nationalism. A generation of nationalist technocrats frightens me. Such a generation will be defenseless against temptations; it will not build anything great. Polish youth needs to be given something larger than this to believe in."

He was speaking in terms of a need for moral goals, but the point has wider relevance. Perhaps the goal of building a Europe in which the new concept of communities could replace the outmoded concept of destructive nationalism could be made exciting enough to help fill some of the moral vacuum he feared.

Henry Owen

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